Department of Public Works
Indianapolis
Gregory A. Ballard, Mayor

INDY SNOW FORCE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I get the latest information on snow plowing?

During snow and winter weather events, the latest information on the City's snow removal efforts will be available at www.indy.gov/snow. Updates will also be posted to Twitter, follow @IndySnowForce. Periodic updates will also be available through local TV, radio and print outlets. Questions or concerns should be directed to the Mayor's Action Center by calling (317) 327-4622.

Who is responsible for plowing which streets?

Major Thoroughfares, Secondary Streets, and Residential Streets

Indy Snow Force, within the City's Department of Public Works (DPW), is responsible for winter maintenance on more than 6,000 lane miles of the City's primary and secondary thoroughfares. Additionally, when the City receives more than 6 inches of snow, Indy Snow Force activates private contractors to provide snow removal services for key residential streets. For questions or concerns about snow removal or ice control on City of Indianapolis maintained streets, contact the Mayor's Action Center at (317) 327-4622.

Interstates, U.S. and State Numbered Highways in Marion County

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) is responsible for plowing and salting all numbered highways in Marion County, including interstates, U.S. highways and State highways. For questions or concerns about snow removal and ice control on interstates and highways, contact INDOT at (317) 462-7751.
Specifically, INDOT is responsible for the following:

- Interstate 65
- Interstate 69
- Interstate 70
- Interstate 74
- Interstate 465
- Interstate 865
- U.S. Route 31 (East Street south of I-465)
- U.S. Route 36 (Rockville Road west of I-465 and Pendleton Pike east of I-465)
- U.S. Route 40 (Washington Street west of I-465 on the City's west side and Washington Street east of I-465 on the City's east side)
- U.S. Route 52 (Brookville Road east of I-465)
- U.S. Route 136 (Crawfordsville Road west of I-465)

Continue on next page

- U.S. Route 421 (Michigan Road north of I-465)
- State Road 37 (Harding Street south of I-465)
- State Road 67 (Kentucky Avenue south of I-465 and Pendleton Pike east of I-465)
- State Road 134 (Girls School Road near the Indiana Women's Prison)
- State Road 135 (Thompson Road west from US 31 to Meridian Street, Meridian Street south from Thompson Road)

Streets in Excluded Cities (Beech Grove, Lawrence, Southport, Speedway)

Marion County's excluded cities provide winter maintenance for roadways independently from Indy Snow Force. For more information about snow removal and ice control in the excluded cities, use the following contacts:

- City of Beech Grove - (317) 788-4977
- City of Lawrence - (317) 545-8787
- City of Southport – (317) 786-5489
- Town of Speedway – (317) 246-4141

Marion County Borders

Marion County is bordered by 96th Street on the north, County Line Road on the south, Carroll Road on the east, and Raceway Road on the west. Depending on the border road, snow removal and ice control is the responsibility of several different agencies including the following:

- 96th Street (North)
  - City of Carmel - Street Department: (317) 733-2001
  - Town of Fishers - Public Works Department: (317) 595-3160
  - Town of Zionsville – Street and Stormwater Department: (317) 873-4544
  - Hamilton County Highway Department: (317) 773-7770
  - Boone County Highway Department: (765) 482-4550
- County Line Road (South)
  - Indy Snow Force: (317) 327-4622
- Carroll Road (East)
  - Indy Snow Force: (317) 327-4622
  - City of Lawrence: (317) 545-8787
- Raceway Road
  - Town of Avon: (317) 272-0948
  - Town of Plainfield: (317) 839-2561
  - Hendricks County Highway Department: (317) 745-9227

Which streets are plowed and treated first and why?

Streets are plowed in a systematic manner:

- **Major Thoroughfares**
  - These roads are plowed first because they link the City's police, fire and emergency services and include roads thousands of commuters and residents depend on every day, especially during rush hour.

Continue on next page

- Examples:
    - Keystone Avenue
    - Washington Street
    - Meridian Street
    - Michigan Road
    - Fall Creek Parkway/Binford Boulevard

- **Secondary Streets**

    - Roads in this category are highly traveled but not as much as primary routes. As a general rule, these routes feed into major thoroughfares.

        - Examples:
            - Southeastern Avenue
            - Ditch Road
            - Five Points Road
            - Tibbs Avenue
            - Mitthoefer Road

- **Residential Streets**

    - When the City receives more than 6 inches of snow the City will activate private contractors to plow residential streets. Residential streets are not salted.

    - Neighborhoods and subdivisions in which homeowners associations (HOA's) provide snow removal service do not receive additional plowing from the City or City contractors.

Who takes care of sidewalks and when must they be cleared?

According to the Municipal Code of Indianapolis (Sec. 431-106), property owners and occupants are responsible for keeping sidewalks clear of snow and ice.

Property owners should clear a 5 feet wide path along the sidewalk, where conditions allow. This width allows pedestrians in wheelchairs, people with children in strollers, students walking to school, and individuals with assistive devices mobility and access.

If the snow stops falling after 7 p.m. you have until 9 a.m. the next morning to clear the sidewalk.

If the snow stops falling after 9 a.m. you have until 7 p.m. that evening to clear the sidewalk.

Continue on next page

What if a sidewalk isn't cleared of snow or ice?

Failure to clear sidewalks of snow and ice in a timely manner may result in a fine of up to $50. Report snow or ice covered walks to the Mayor's Action Center (MAC) at (317) 327-4622.

How does snow affect trash and recycling pickup?

During snow events, trash and recycling will be collected on a regular schedule unless otherwise posted.

Residents should place their trash and recycling carts or bags on flat ground, not on the snow bank, with snow removed from the tops and sides of the carts. Residents need to clear a 4 feet wide area on all sides of the trash carts or bags.

Residents should remove carts and bags from streets and extensions as soon as possible after pickup so they won't be buried or blown over by the snow being moved by plows.

Are vehicles allowed to pass a snowplow?

There are no state laws that prohibit passing a snowplow. However, the action of passing can be extremely dangerous, because pavement conditions vary across the path taken to pass. The majority of crashes involving snowplows and vehicles happen when a snowplow is rear ended or hit while being passed.

What should be kept in mind when shoveling/plowing driveways?

Property owners and snow removal contractors should be aware that shoveling or plowing snow from driveways onto or across roads is illegal, because it can present a serious traffic hazard to motorists. Instead, pile the snow behind the curb or shoulder on your side of the road.

How can I avoid having a City plow truck push snow into my driveway after I clean it?

Throughout the winter months, City crews and private contractors will be out clearing the streets during and after snowfalls. At the same time, residents are clearing their driveways.

Many times while this is going on, a snowplow truck will go by and fill in the end of a freshly cleared driveway with snow from the road, causing frustration and additional work for residents.

As plows push snow and ice off streets sometimes driveways will be blocked and this is unavoidable. Please understand that the City's first priority is the safety of the traveling public and clearing the streets of snow and ice.

So why does the city push the snow off the road onto the shoulder, only to come back and push the snow farther back on the shoulder?

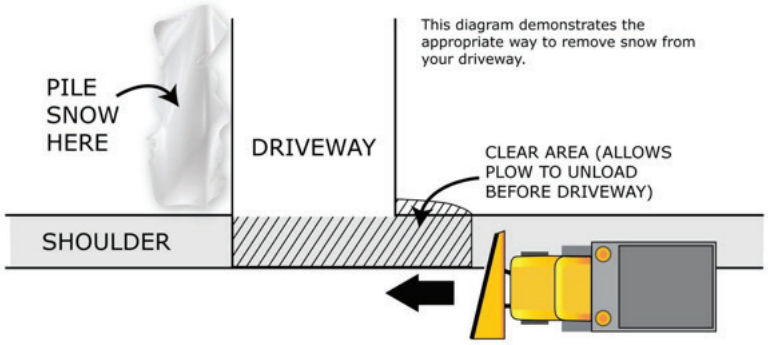
The truck usually makes one pass to open up the street so residents may get in and out. Then, the truck may come back to widen the road and the shoulders for future snow accumulation.

Residents sometimes call and ask why we cannot pick up the blade when going by their driveway.

Continue on next page

This is not a practical solution, and our drivers would never finish clearing the roads due to the multitude of driveways. There is, however, a method of clearing your driveway that can help minimize the amount of snow blocking driveways:

- If possible (not always practical), clear your driveway after we have finished plowing the roads.
- When clearing your driveway, place as much snow as possible in the direction of travel, on the downstream side of the road.
- Clear an area upstream from your driveway opening to form a "pocket" for the snow from the road to go into. More of the snow from the road will go into the pocket and less will land in the end of your driveway. (Please see the diagram below.)



Why does a street plow leave snow on sidewalks?

The city is aware of the difficulty snow plowing can create for sidewalk clearance, particularly at corners. The city works with plow drivers to reduce this situation the best we can.

However, given the crowded nature of streets and the volume of snow we are dealing with, snow at sidewalk intersections can pile as it does with driveways. Property owners may need to use ice melt and metal shovels if the snow has become very packed down.

Property owners are always responsible for clearing snow and ice along their sidewalk frontage in accordance with municipal code and can be fined if a snow plow pushes snow onto the sidewalk, even after shoveling.

A City plow truck was speeding past my house.

Indy Snow Force drivers typically drive at speeds between 18 to 25 miles per hour while plowing snow. Our drivers are required to follow all applicable laws and will be held responsible for violations. If you observe a truck that you believe is exceeding the maximum safe speed, please provide the time and location and if possible the vehicle number for us to follow up. Please be aware that frequently the trucks are in a low gear and using high engine RPM to maintain the power necessary to push the snow; this may create the impression that they are moving faster than they actually are.

Continue on next page

A city plow knocked over my mailbox.

Please call the Mayor's Action Center at (317) 327-4622 if this occurs. Staff will install a replacement mailbox at their earliest convenience. The replacement mailbox will consist of a standard 4x4 treated post and standard US Postal service approved box. All replacements shall comply with national traffic safety standards and postal service requirements.

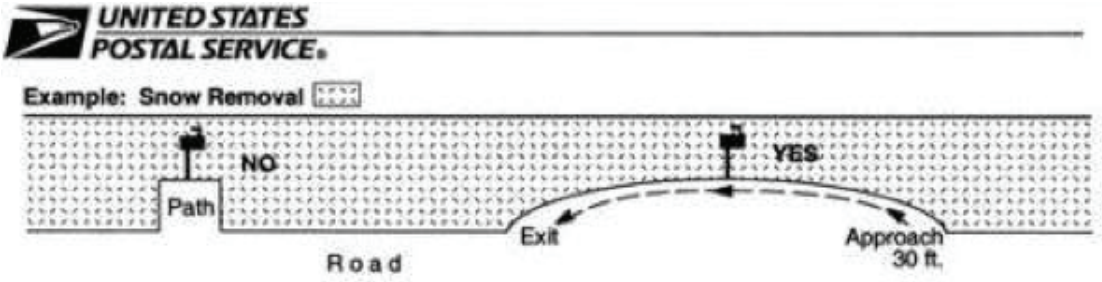
Please note however, that a plow itself knocking over a mailbox is extremely rare; commonly the cause of mailbox damage is from 200-300 pounds of snow being thrown from the plow blade, and this is unavoidable. In this situation, the City will not replace damaged mailboxes. This policy is consistent with most municipalities in the area.

The Post Office says they can't access my mailbox and won't deliver my mail.

Maintenance of access for postal delivery is mail customers' responsibility.

Several reasons may prevent mail carriers from getting closer to your mailbox, including the following: blocked access due to ice, snow, or landscaping that endangers the driver or risks damage to the mail vehicle if they approach closer as well as improperly-installed mailboxes that encroach on the drivable road surface. Sometimes attempts to push the snow over further results in damaged mailboxes due to the force of the snow against the post.

Please see the diagram below for guidance on how to clear snow and ice from the area near your mailbox to ensure that you continue to receive postal delivery.



A city plow buried my landscaping or yard decorations with snow.

Occasionally, items placed in the public right-of-way may be damaged by snow removal operations. Please remove items, such as portable basketball hoops, lawn ornaments, statuary, etc., so they do not become damaged. The City is not responsible for damage to items left in a street's right-of-way.

A fire hydrant on or near my property is blocked with snow.

Do a good deed for your community - clear snow away from fire hydrants. This provides quick access for firefighters and water maintenance workers in case of an emergency.

Why apply salt to the roadways in the winter?

Salt is used to make the roadways safer during the winter. Salt lowers the freezing point of snow and ice and keeps the snow "workable" so it is more easily removed. Salt can be used for anti-icing, de-icing, or melting.

Continue on next page

Why don't the City's private contractors use salt on residential streets?

The City's private contractors do not having salt spreading capabilities of the same capacity as City trucks. For that reason, it is impractical for the City's contractors to salt residential streets. With that in mind, the City's contractors leave a thin layer of snow when plowing residential streets to maintain traction for motorists.

What is the importance of pavement temperatures? Why can't you just use air temperatures?

The ability of salt to melt snow and ice depends on the temperature of the roadway and not the air temperature. During autumn, the pavement is often kept warmer than the surrounding air because of the warm soil. During spring, the reverse may be true: The pavement temperatures can be colder than the air because the soil is still frozen from the low winter temperatures. The sun also has a strong influence on the pavement temperatures. It can help heat the pavement and speed the melting process. Air and pavement temperatures can often differ by as much as 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

What are the limitations of salt?

The minimum practical application range for salt is a pavement temperature of 15-20°F and above.

While salt will melt snow and ice down to a pavement temperature of -6°F, it can melt over five times as much ice at 30°F as at 20°F. Thus, the effectiveness of salt is sensitive to small differences in pavement temperature. The City will attempt to apply only the amount required for temperature, time and use: too little and the roadway will refreeze; too much is a waste of money and resources.

When the pavement temperature drops below 15°F, the effectiveness of salt is decreased significantly.

Wind conditions must also be considered when deciding on whether to apply salt. As the temperatures drop and the snow becomes drier, the wind can begin to blow the snow across the pavement. If there is a chemical residue left on the pavement from a previous salt application, blowing snow can be attracted to the residue and stick to the pavement.

The effectiveness of salt can also be affected by the type of pavement. For example, salt works better on new asphaltic (blacktop) pavements than on tined concrete pavements. The City's salt includes other ice melting de-icing agents to increase its effectiveness at lower temperatures and to help it better adhere to the pavement.

Why would salt be spread on a bare street after a snowstorm is over?

The projected temperature of the street surface will influence the treatment of a road. If plowing operations have finished and a road is left in "black and wet" condition, there is sometimes a danger of the water re-freezing on the road. There are times, especially at night, when a post-storm salt application may be necessary.

Continue on next page

What steps has the City taken to ensure it doesn't run out of salt?

The City begins each winter season with its salt barns filled to a maximum capacity of 18,700 tons. In addition to what is on hand at the beginning of the season, the City receives an additional 30,000 tons to replenish the barns as salt supplies are used from one event to the next. Should conditions warrant, the City can place additional orders throughout the winter season. In extreme conditions, the City can also source salt from multiple vendors to ensure that salt supplies remain steady.

Why is there a difference in street maintenance performance from storm to storm?

One of the biggest factors that determine the City's performance is the type of storm and range of temperatures. Storms with low temperatures can be difficult because salt becomes less effective at lower temperatures. Storms with high winds also are a challenge because the snow quickly blows back onto the roadway after the plows pass.

Why is it that I never seem to see a snowplow during a winter storm?

Indy Snow Force is responsible for snow removal on more than 6,000 lane miles of major thoroughfares and secondary streets. Using 90 trucks on a normal shift, the average time to complete a plow route is approximately 2-3 hours but some cycle times can be longer. Time is also needed to load and reload the trucks with salt.

We pay property taxes, why don't we get better snow removal service?

The property taxes you pay are used for your local and county governmental units and for schools, not for day-to-day road maintenance. The City's street maintenance budget is funded solely by the gas tax and vehicle registration fees passed on by the State of Indiana. This revenue funds all day to day maintenance activities including traffic signals, signage, pavement markings, sweeping and both temporary and permanent pavement repairs.

We pay taxes, why doesn't the City clear every street?

Including major thoroughfares, secondary streets and residential streets, the City is responsible for nearly 10,000 lane miles. It is not practical, nor is it financially viable, for the City and its contractors to plow and salt every street during every snow event.

The City's goal is to keep major thoroughfares and secondary streets safe for travel during snow events, because these streets link the City's police, fire and emergency facilities, along with hospitals, schools and retail centers.

When the City receives more than 6 inches of snow, Indy Snow Force activates private contractors to provide snow removal services for key residential streets.

Why is the city promoting bicycle commuting and then not clearing the bike lanes better?

Total snow and ice control in the on street bike lanes is a difficult task due to the nature of location and level of use. Bicycles lack the tire size and weight to effectively crush and move the salt granules around to promote melting action. Additionally, the lack of heat from tire friction and drivetrain radiation limits the effectiveness of salt applications. The location of bike lanes at the edge of the road also subjects them to run off from melted snow plowed to the edges. This daily runoff refreezes.